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LETTER DATED 8 SEPTEMBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Following the postponement of the Arusha negotiations on Burundi on 25 August 1997, a summit meeting of the heads of State of the region (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) was held on 3 and 4 September 1997 at Dar es Salaam at the invitation of the Tanzanian President, Mr. Benjamin William Mpaka.

Burundi was not invited to attend this meeting.

On the same day, 4 September 1997, the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations formally submitted to the Security Council the final communiqué of the summit (see S/1997/687) before Burundi had even been informed of it, in accordance with the declaration of the Dar es Salaam summit meeting.

The Government of Burundi wishes to reaffirm once again its total commitment to a peace process in which negotiations are open to all the parties to the conflict.

A response to the Dar es Salaam communiqué reflecting this will be transmitted to the Security Council as soon as the Government is formally notified of the letter and the spirit of the Dar es Salaam summit meeting, as recommended in the joint communiqué of 4 September 1997.

In order to keep the Security Council regularly informed, I have the honour to transmit to you:

1. The statement on the peace process issued by the Government of Burundi on 2 September 1997 and
2. The memorandum by the Government of Burundi concerning the postponement of the political dialogue open to all parties to the conflict in Burundi.



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I should be grateful if you would have these documents circulated as documents of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gamaliel NDARUZANIYE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

Statement issued by the Government of Burundi on 2 September 1997

The Government of the Republic of Burundi notes that there have been some recent developments related to the peace process. Having examined the recent developments, the Government would like to communicate the following:

1. The Government reaffirms its total commitment to make peace through negotiations open to all the parties. Such negotiations constitute one of the priorities in its peace programme.

The Government would like to warn the general public about a disinformation campaign aimed at creating the impression that it has withdrawn from negotiations.

2. With regard to the meeting of 25 August 1997, the Government only asked for a postponement to allow for better consultations with a view to giving this process a chance to succeed.

That is why the Government reaffirms its availability for the opening of negotiations on 29 September 1997. That would give enough time for proper consultations among the various partners.

The Government proposes that the opening of negotiations take place in a neutral city in the region, e.g. Addis Ababa (OAU headquarters), Harare, Lusaka, Pretoria, etc.

3. Concerning mediation, the Government notes that there are problems.

That is why the Government requests that the scope of mediation should be broadened so that it might be reassuring to all the parties.

4. The Government has just heard that a summit meeting of heads of State on the question of Burundi will be held in Dar es Salaam on 3 and 4 September 1997.

The Government is surprised that such meetings take place without the participation of representatives of the Government of Burundi.

The heads of State will therefore be deprived of reliable information for a proper assessment of the situation.

The Government would like to point out that, at the summit meeting, Tanzania is going to play the role of judge while taking sides.

5. The Government notes that the present relations between Burundi and Tanzania do not create an environment conducive to peace.

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That is why the Government requests that the countries of the subregion initiate a process of mediation between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania with a view to re-establishing normal relations more conducive to peace between the two countries.

Annex II

Memorandum by the Government of Burundi concerning the
postponement of the all-party political dialogue

A. Commitment of the Government of Burundi to seek a political
solution to the Burundian crisis through dialogue

1. Convinced that the future of the Burundian nation requires the reconciliation of all its constituent parts, the authorities installed by the change of 25 July 1996 have undertaken to hold a political dialogue open to all parties to the conflict in Burundi, including armed factions. Their intention is to build a national consensus on fundamental issues and to establish institutions to allay the concerns of all citizens.

2. On 25 August 1997, the first session of the inter-Burundian dialogue was scheduled to begin at Arusha within the framework of the Burundi peace process. After assessing the preparations for this dialogue, and in the light of developments in its relations with the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government of Burundi was compelled to seek a postponement of the start of the dialogue.

B. Reasons for the request for postponement

3. From 5 to 7 July 1997, a delegation from the mediator visited Burundi, and the Government relayed its concerns to the mediator. For the dialogue to take place in an atmosphere of calm, the Government had suggested that the necessary conditions should be created by means of the following steps: (1) the easing of sanctions, which had been agreed at the Arusha summit meeting of 16 April 1997, should be fully implemented; (2) the Burundian people should be allowed to engage in political dialogue free from the pressure of economic sanctions; (3) the terrorist organizations which regularly menaced Burundi should be prevented from attacking Burundians from the country in which the negotiations were being conducted; (4) normal diplomatic relations should be restored between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania; and (5) the necessary pressure should be brought to bear on terrorist organizations so that they would cease their hostilities.

4. The following proposals were put forward in order to render work with the mediator more effective: (1) the mediator should visit Burundi; (2) a delegation should be sent to the United Republic of Tanzania to complete the technical preparations; (3) Burundi must be invited to all meetings relating to the peace process.

5. The following observations can be made concerning the preparations for the political dialogue:

- The Burundian Government was not consulted about practical questions relating to its organization, in particular when the negotiations would start and who the participants would be.

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- The Tanzanian delegation responsible for carrying out the preparations with the Burundian team had promised, at the end of its visit in early July 1997, to return in time to complete the consultations and inform the Burundian side of the state of the preparations. The Tanzanian representative of the mediator appointed for that purpose arrived in Burundi only three days before the political dialogue was scheduled to begin.
- After requesting a postponement of one month in order to clarify questions and concerns raised by the Government of Burundi and other partners, the Tanzanian side made no reply of any kind, according to the report by the mediator's representative. Likewise, the technical team sent by the Government of Burundi one week before the 25 August meeting to prepare for the dialogue received no help from the Tanzanian authorities.

6. As to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the holding of a dialogue, the Government of Burundi notes with regret that recently the Tanzanian authorities and the mediator himself have increasingly made statements and gestures that have only succeeded in creating tension between the two countries and discouraging the participation of certain internal partners in the Arusha meeting. In addition, the Tanzanian side has made an additional issue out of the question of economic sanctions and border security.

7. Armed Burundian refugees regularly attack Burundi from Tanzanian territory. The Tanzanian authorities have in fact set up refugee camps a few kilometres from our common border, in violation of the relevant international regulations. This attitude casts some doubt on the neutrality of the United Republic of Tanzania, making it hard for Burundians to accept mediation conducted by a noted citizen of that country.

C. Observations and proposals by the Government of Burundi

8. The Government believes that, before the first session of the all-party dialogue can be convened, further consultations must be held with those conducting the mediation with a view to eliciting a consensus on the holding of peace talks.

9. The attention of the regional and international community should be drawn here to the danger of guiding the peace process in Burundi by means of ill-advised constraints. External coercive measures coupled with internal constraints will surely pose a major obstacle to the peace process.

10. The Government of Burundi denies harbouring any belligerent intentions against its sister country, the United Republic of Tanzania. At the same time, it calls upon the Tanzanian side, in keeping with the relevant Geneva Convention, to discourage the armed refugees who are using its territory to massacre innocent Burundians. In addition, the United Republic of Tanzania, which has driven Burundian diplomats from their mission in Dar es Salaam in favour of the rebel leaders, should settle this question in strict compliance with the Vienna Convention.

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11. The Government of Burundi appeals to the regional and international community to help create an atmosphere of calm that will be as favourable as possible to the inter-Burundian peace talks.

12. In the light of the incomprehension and doubt expressed by certain partners regarding the neutrality of the mediators and the country hosting the peace talks, the Government of Burundi requests its partners, particularly those in the subregion, to:

- Ensure that the mediation effort is more neutral;
- Identify a neutral venue outside the United Republic of Tanzania for the peace talks, preferably within the subregion;
- Hold the first session of the inter-Burundian dialogue before the end of September 1997.

13. The Government reaffirms its total commitment to the inter-Burundian dialogue for peace and reiterates its appeal to the regional and international community to help it create an atmosphere conducive to that dialogue. Notwithstanding these temporary difficulties, nothing will stop Burundi along the road to peace and reconstruction which it has taken of its own sovereign will.
